

By request, I publish the following discourse, copying it as published in a newspaper of Georgia, called the *Cedartown Express*, in its issue of May 4th, 1877; and make some remarks on the same:

#### A SERMON ON ELECTION.

BY REV. S. P. RICHARDSON.

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."—Romans 19: 11.

In the discussion of the doctrines of Particular Election and Final Perseverance of the Saints, (these subjects being so vital, and standing so nearly related to the whole plan of redemption, and especially the distinctive doctrines held by both Calvinists and Arminians,) it is difficult to discuss them without constant allusion to the distinctive views held by both parties on all fundamental doctrines taught in their creeds.

If the doctrine of Particular Election can be proved true, by the Bible, then, as effect follows cause, the doctrine of Final Perseverance must also be true. But if the doctrine of personal election to salvation is false, then the doctrine of final perseverance must also be false. It is difficult to give the common reader an intelligent view of these doctrines, without first giving a synopsis of the theological views held by both parties.

The Predestinarians hold and teach that when Adam fell, God was under no obligation either to redeem him or his posterity; that he might in justice have allowed them to perish, but if he had done so his mercy would have suffered; therefore God entered into a covenant with His Son to redeem so many of the race, to the praise of His mercy, and left the rest where they were, to perish under the law which Adam had violated, and they had violated in him as their federal head—to the praise of His justice.

The doctrines of Effectual Calling, Imputed Righteousness, and Final Perseverance, all hang upon the doctrine of Particular Election. If it were possible for any one of these doctrines to be true, then all might be true. But there is not one text in all the Bible, when interpreted by the Bible, that favors any such views.

The Arminians believe and teach that when Adam fell, God might in justice have visited the penalty of the law upon him, but could not in justice allow him to live a fallen man and propagate a race of fallen children without their knowledge or consent, and make no provision for their recovery. They teach that God therefore entered into a covenant with Adam, through Christ, for his redemption, and the redemption of the race. This covenant he renewed with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and down to the fulfillment of it in Christ.—They teach that by the death of Christ all men are redeemed from the penalty of Adam's transgression. Romans 5: 18—"Therefore by the offense of one, [or one offense] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, [or one righteousness] the free gift came upon all men unto justifica-

tion of life. Adam having fallen from the platform of creation and holiness on which he was created, God in redemption took him, and all his posterity, and placed them on the platform of grace, embracing the entire race in the covenant, giving all men a fair chance to work out their salvation under a dispensation of grace. They teach that no man is absolutely saved by the death of Christ, and no man is absolutely damned for the sin of Adam; that all men may be saved if they will, and all men may be damned if they choose. Therefore, if a man can, by the grace of God, get religion, or secure his election, then by neglect, or willful disobedience, he may lose the favor of God, and perish everlastingly. In a word, if he has the power by the grace of God to get religion, he has the power by the same grace to lose his religion.

The bible reveals the knowledge of God, the creation of man, his fall, and redemption in Christ; and there is really no mystery in the Word of God as it respects the doctrine of salvation, when the bible is allowed to explain its own teachings.

We now propose to examine and explain what is supposed to be the most difficult doctrine taught in the bible—the doctrine of Election as it stands connected with the plan of redemption.

When Adam fell, but for the grace of God which interposed, he would have died under the penalty of the law which he had violated. His name would have been stricken from the roll of creation, and his posterity would have passed into oblivion.—The earth would have been a permanent solitude, and creation a failure. The Lord might have repeated his work in creating another Adam; but the same results might have followed. It may be asked, Why did God make man as he did? It may be replied, Why did he make him at all? or Why not make him more or less than a man? We have only to do with man as he was, and man as he is; not to teach Infinite Wisdom what he might have done, or what he has left undone. It is our duty to learn in humility and gratitude what the Lord has been pleased to reveal, for his glory and our good. The bible plainly teaches that after the fall of our first parent, God alone could afford him any help. There was no other source to which he could look with any degree of hope. Infinite wisdom, power and love must save, or all was lost. Neither angels nor men had any hand in planning the recovery of man by redemption.—The whole plan of salvation is from God alone. To speak of the eternal counsels of the Godhead is to talk in the dark. Infinite Wisdom in council is absurd. God in justice and mercy devised the whole plan of redemption. The plan originated in divine love, and not in divine sovereignty. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3: 16. God found his poor, fallen, helpless child ruined, forever ruined. God saw no other way to save him, although his fore-

knowledge reached through all eternity, but to come to the manger for him, and touch his flesh by the incarnation of the Son of God. If God could have saved him, or pardoned him, by a mere act of sovereign power, he certainly would not have subjected himself to the laws of humanity, and the death of the cross. God himself declares that there is none other name given under heaven by which man can be saved, but the name of Jesus. It was not the foreknowledge, nor wisdom, nor power, but the love of God that moved him to save fallen man. Foreknowledge saw the end with the beginning of the whole plan of redemption, reaching through four thousand years.—In this grand scheme of salvation, as it develops to the human mind more fully, age after age, the doctrine contained in my text, of unconditional election, is taught. This form of election is taught in the Old Testament, and explained in the New, and specially argued by St. Paul in all his epistles. This form of election refers always and specially to the plan of salvation and never to salvation itself of any one. In redemption man must have a Savior, and that fact must be revealed to his faith. Some one must be elected, or chosen to receive the revelation. Christ must be born of a woman, and of the race of Adam. The law of God must be revealed to some one. The worship and service of God must be established in the earth. Some of the race of man must be elected for all these purposes, from the fact that they all enter into the plan of salvation by the redemption which is in Christ. No part of it could fail on the part of God, and the offer of salvation be made certain to man. God in all this did not and could not (in the relation of things) call to his aid or counsel any creature as an agent in working out the plan of redemption without the possibility of failure, or any division of honor—which he will not share with any creature. He "trode the wine-press alone," and his own arm brought salvation. Here let me say, once for all, that while God chose men, women and angels in working out the plan of redemption, not one was ever employed as an agent. The plan of salvation embraces all time as well as all men, and was therefore prospective as well as retrospective. Men and angels had both been tried, and both had failed; and what had been in their cases might occur again. Nothing short of the immutability of God's word and oath could secure a saving trust in the human soul. God nowhere in his Book requires man, as man, to trust either in men or angels, but in the living God.

The question often arises in the mind of the ordinary bible reader, If salvation is of the Lord alone, and men, women or angels had no agency in it; and God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth; makes one vessel by his sovereign power to honor, and another to dishonor, out of clay of the same lump; chooses Jacob and rejects Esau, before they are born, or have done any good or evil—then the doctrine of unconditional elec-

tion must be true. And besides all this, here is the foreknowledge of God—"For whom he did foreknow he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." The Calvinists have been unfortunately able by mixing together the unconditional election, as it stands inseparably connected with the plan of salvation, and the unconditional election of the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel; and then still further mixing with the two forms of unconditional election as clearly taught in the bible, a third form of election, which is personal and conditional; and to make the darkness still more dark—the so-called mystery of all mysteries still more mysterious—they have added another form of election, growing out of the foreknowledge of God, and the repentance and faith of the creature. That is, God from all eternity seeing who would repent and believe, elected them unto eternal life. No wonder the Calvinists themselves should acknowledge the doctrine of predestination an unsolvable mystery. The plain fact is, all the dogmas of their whole system center in the unconditional election of a part of mankind to eternal life. The Calvinists are not the only people who have tried to make themselves the peculiar favorites of heaven. The Pharisees belonged to that class. And wonderful it is, that all who believe the doctrine should have the strange infatuation at the same time to believe themselves among the elect. The apostle Paul devotes a large part of his epistles to that class of Jews, showing them from the Old Testament, and from the general teachings of the Savior, that their election to adoption, to the covenants, their receiving the law, and the service of God, was not of their choosing, but of divine appointment; not on the ground of merit on their part, but of divine necessity in carrying out the plan of redemption; and that they had, by their unconditional election for these purposes, no more right to eternal life than the rest of mankind.

The key to the whole mystery of unconditional election, as clearly taught in the bible, is that all this election specially applies to the working out of the plan of salvation, and never applies in any instance to the personal salvation of the parties chosen. God sees things that are not yet, as if they were; and by his foreknowledge the whole plan of salvation was before him. In perfecting the work of redemption, foreknowledge and election—unconditional election—were necessities growing out of the very nature of the plan of salvation itself. Without foreknowledge God could not have connected the cross with the promise he made to Eve in Paradise; and without unconditional election, the plan could not have been consummated with divine certainty. Knowledge of any event before it takes place, can have no effect upon the event, either in preventing its occurrence or in bringing it to pass. The existence of the event necessitates the foreknowledge of it, and not the foreknowledge the event. The eye is obliged to see an object when brought